

PART AND PARCEL: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF EXPERIENCE

By:

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Abstract

In order to give voice to the understanding of my individuality, I create work as a memoir through visual symbolism. My hope is that as I revisit these parts of my life I am able to reflect on and release negative fragments. I choose to create work visually emphasizing the extremes of life using accumulation of imagery, vivid color, bold markings and textures. I balance the extremes by visually communicating the nuances of life through the use of delicate line quality, a soft color palette, and calm and repetitive subjects to indicate meditation and the passage of time. This body of work allows me to recognize myself as an artist. In turn, my creative process helps me to understand where I want to be as a person in order to maintain a sense of balance.

Table of Contents

Title Page

Acceptance Page ii

Abstract iii

Table of Contents iv

Thesis v

*"I have brittle bones it seems,
I bite my tongue and I torch my dreams.
I have a little voice to speak with and
A mind of thoughts and secrets.
Things cannot be reversed.
We learn from the times that we are cursed.
We learn from the ones we fear the worst
And love from ones we hate the most."*

Elena Tonra

Three things that I notice regulating my sense of identity are my mind, my body, and my surroundings. Relationships, fleeting moments of significance, the small sensory subtleties of memory, cherished objects, and my ever-changing mental and physical states additionally inform my sense of self. In order to give voice to the understanding of my individuality, I create work as a memoir through visual symbolism. My hope is that as I revisit these parts of my life I am able to reflect on and release negative fragments.

Materials and Process

I choose to create work visually emphasizing the extremes of life using accumulation of imagery, vivid color, bold markings

and textures. I balance the extremes by visually communicating the nuances of life through the use of delicate line quality, a soft color palette, and calm and repetitive subjects to indicate meditation and the passage of time. Some of the specific processes and materials I use are monotype, collage, charcoal, graphite, and watercolor. A monotype is a singular image that is developed on one surface and transferred to another substrate that is the actual artwork. I choose to use watercolor monotypes primarily because, with their watery consistency, I am able to achieve subtle color gradations. In using this method and other transfer processes there is a shift that occurs from the transfer of the image, which creates a degraded quality and alteration on the final image. The visual disconnection is similar to unclear communication in relationships. There is a freedom and a visceral quality to working this way. After this part of the process is complete, I then make decisions whether to revisit the work and regain clarity or leave it be. Charcoal is used in many of my works. It is a versatile medium that can be used for delicate drawings, dramatic markings and as a physical object. Charcoal has a strong elemental link to my work, as carbon. Carbon is in everything and marks our journey through life; we begin with carbon and we end with carbon.

Mind

For my entire life, the voice in my head has been one of relentless negativity, slow, subtle torturous anxiety, low self-esteem and depression. This voice has its own energy source and only recently have I managed to tame it into a more rational being. This allows me a greater capacity for understanding the beauty in my life. In *Release*, I wanted to give a visual voice



***Release*, 2012, watercolor monotype with charcoal**

to the need for me to escape this force dragging me down. Rather than allowing my negative voice to have a say in my

identity, I work through it by putting it down on paper, canvas, clay, or wood and record it visually in some way. While I am creating it simply becomes a conversation worked out through materials. The string in *Unspoken* represents the burden from a



***Unspoken*, 2013, found objects, ceramic, cotton string**

relationship. The accumulation of materials along with the meditative cutting, tying, and bundling allows me time to pause and reflect.

Body

My body plays an important role in my work and communicates my identity on a personal and societal level. In *Wander*, the lower torso, legs and feet are depicted from a strange



***Wander*, 2012, watercolor monotype**

perspective to emphasize discomfort with subject matter that reflects two main focal points, the empty torso and feet which

are hovering above ground. The vacant space in the torso represents the indecision about child bearing and an awareness of nature and society's clock. The feet, the part of the body that ordinarily bears the weight of being, are hovering - as either relief from the stress of burden or a lack of control. *Grief* also addresses the idea of lack of control in the form of mortality. A lace runner that was owned by my paternal grandmother is transformed into something resembling bone or skin by simply being pinned up and displayed in a different



***Grief*, 2012, Xerox transfer, charcoal, acrylic**

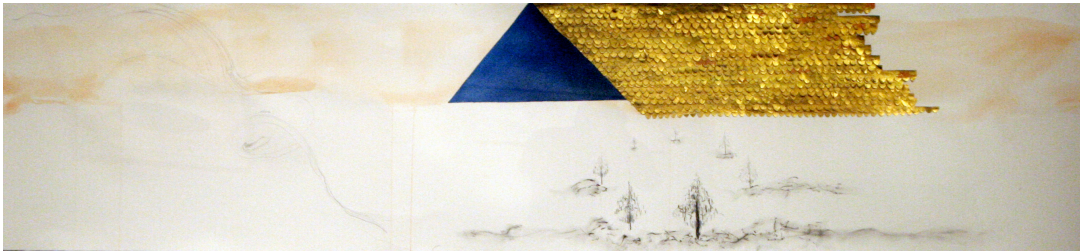
orientation. The ring of rocks below the lace runner are drawn in charcoal and are meant to signify a resting place that represents an end but also a beginning.

Surroundings

Growing up, I lived two different lives, one in Texas and one in Wisconsin. Wisconsin was an oasis for me with its strikingly lush landscape in comparison to my other home. It was also an escape from the person I was when surrounded by my life down south. As a young woman, I was easily influenced by my interpretation of how others viewed me. The people in Wisconsin didn't have preconceived notions about me. I could view the world in a new light and be comfortable with who I was. Because the family dynamic was much more intimate during the long summer months, I also learned more every year about the good and bad that comes with the realization that one's parents are only human.

I have a vivid memory of a grouping of spruce trees that stood 30 feet tall at the front of the lake house in Wisconsin. They surrounded a small, simply structured gazebo and felt as if they were guarding our house, protecting us. I did not pay close attention to the strong stature of these trees until the decision was made to cut them down. To see the contrast of something so seemingly indestructible, reduced to nothing, has

become a powerful statement for me. The transformation of the trees became a metaphor for my growing understanding of family. I created three works as a series. The first is, *Rest While It's Safe*, which is a peaceful gathering of healthy trees that are protected by a beautifully precious, unknown structure.



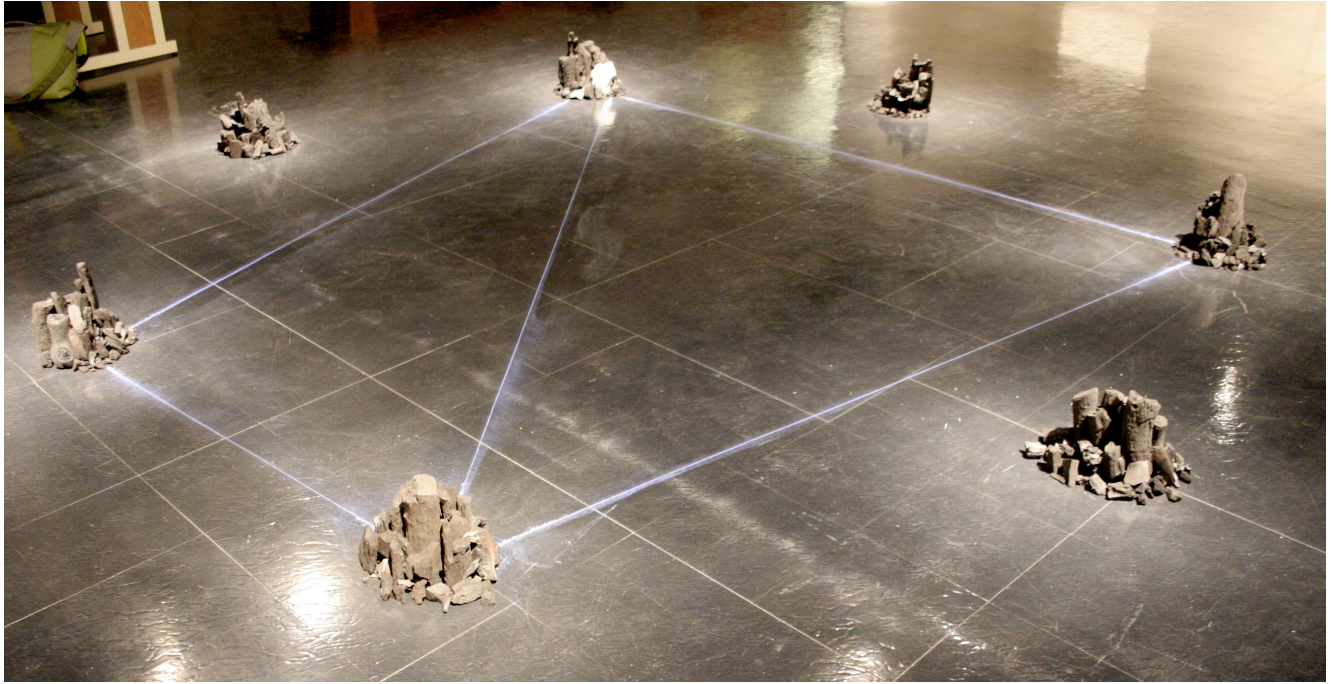
***Rest While It's Safe*, 2013, paper collage, charcoal, watercolor, graphite**

There is a threat approaching but it is vague in the distance. *In The Fall We Sleep All Day*, shows the trees in transition,



***In The Fall We Sleep All Day*, 2013, watercolor monotype, oils**

with their limbs cut and disabled, remaining quietly in denial. Finally, we are left with connections and communications missing between the ones that are supposed to be closest. *Can't Chase This Fire Away* is an installation of the trees in their final



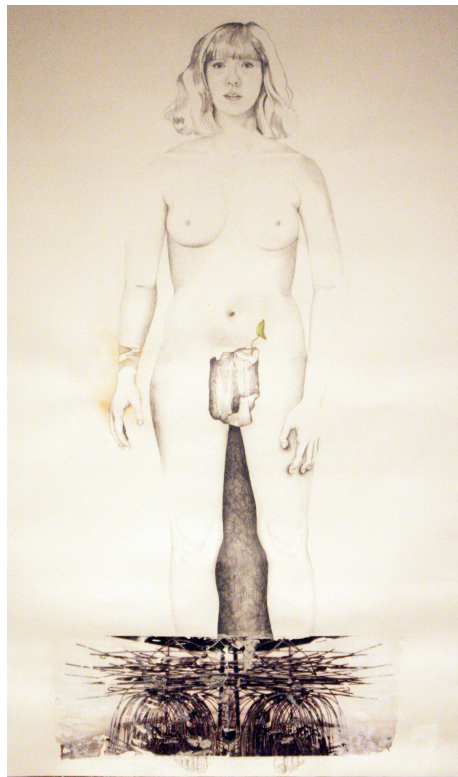
Can't Chase This Fire Away, 2013, lump charcoal, ceramic, chalk

stage, broken down and solitary. Piles of charcoal mark their resting place and signify members of my family. The vibrant blue chalk lines indicate varying levels of communication and the ceramic insert resembling the charcoal represents the permanence of memory.

Conclusion

My thesis exhibition has been a journey revisiting parts of my past through the exploration of symbolism, materials and

process. Learning to trust one's own judgment, in creativity and life, takes time, patience and perseverance. I am in a place now, in my studio practice, where I trust every mark I make. Even when that mark may be removed or covered later, it is still part of the creative process. This confidence in my process, from choosing materials to understanding imagery as symbolism, is evident in the artwork and carries my personal stamp. In the end, this body of work allows me to recognize myself as an artist. In turn, my creative process helps me to understand where I want to be as a person in order to maintain a sense of balance.



Self-Portrait, 2013, graphite, Xerox transfer, watercolor